DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 469 862 CE 084 006

TITLE	Twenty-First Century Moonlighters. Issues in Labor Statistics. Summary 02-07.
INSTITUTION	Bureau of Labor Statistics (DOL), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-09-00
NOTE	3p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Information Services, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E. Room 2860, Washington, D.C. 20212. Information in this report will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request (voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339 (Toll Free)). For full text: http://www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils50.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Age Differences; Blacks; Debt (Financial); Employed Women; Employee Attitudes; *Employment Patterns; Entry Workers; Ethnic Groups; Hispanic Americans; *Influences; Males; Marital Status; Minority Groups; *Multiple Employment; National Surveys; Older Adults; *Part Time Employment; Sex Differences; Trend Analysis; *Work Attitudes; Young Adults
IDENTIFIERS	Current Population Survey

ABSTRACT

In May 2001, 7.8 million people in the United States (5.7% of U.S. workers) worked multiple jobs. The May 2001 Current Population Survey asked multiple jobholders their main reason for holding more than one job. These percentages of respondents gave the following reasons: to meet expenses or pay off debt, 27.8%; to earn extra money, 35.4%; to build a business or get experience in a different job, 4.6%; enjoy the second job, 17.4%; other reasons, 12.5%; and reason not available, 2.3%. Young workers (aged 16-24 years) were more likely to work multiple jobs to earn extra money than were workers aged 25 or older. The share of adults who moonlighted in order to build a business or get experience in a second job decreased with age, and the share of workers who moonlighted because they enjoyed the second job tended to decrease with age. The number of white individuals who reported working multiple jobs because they enjoyed the second job was nearly double the number of blacks and was 7 percentage points higher than the number of Hispanics citing the same reason. One-third of blacks and more one-fourth of whites moonlighted to meet expenses or pay off debt. Fewer workers were moonlighting in May 2001 than in May 1997. (MN)

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ED 469 862

ISSUES in Labor Statistics

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Summary 02-07 September 2002

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Twenty-first century moonlighters

In May 2001, 7.8 million persons worked multiple jobs in the United States, a figure representing 5.7 percent of all workers. Why did these persons choose to work more than one job? To answer this question, the May 2001 Current Population Survey (CPS) asked multiple jobholders: "What is the MAIN reason you worked at more than one job?" Respondents were asked to choose among the following response options: Meet expenses or pay off debt, earn extra money, build a business or get experience in a different job, enjoy the second job, or some other reason.

Results from the May 2001 supplement reveal that more than 1 in 3 moonlighters worked multiple jobs in order to earn extra money, a category that could include saving for the future or getting extra money to buy something special. An additional 27.8 percent moonlighted in order to meet expenses or pay off debt. Among the other common reasons for working multiple jobs, enjoyment of the second job was reported by 17.4 percent of moonlighters, and 4.6 percent wanted to build a business or get experience in a different job. (See table and chart.)

As mentioned above, multiple jobholders gave various reasons for their decision to trade in nonwork time for an additional job. These reasons varied depending on demographic characteristics. For example, young workers (aged 16 to 24) were much more likely to work more than one job in order to earn extra money (51.8 percent) than were persons aged 25 and older (32.6 percent). It stands to reason that younger workers, many of whom are not yet fully responsible for their own basic support, are likely to view their job(s) as providing "extra" money. The share of adults working multiple jobs in order to build a business or get experience in a different job, while relatively small to begin with, tended to decrease with age. Conversely, the share of workers who moonlighted because they enjoyed the second job tended to increase with age. For example, only 9.3 percent of young workers (aged 16 to 24) reported that they worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the work on the second job, compared with 27.0 percent of older workers (aged 55 and older).

Hispanic moonlighters were about equally divided between working more than one job in order to meet expenses or pay off debt (40.9 percent) and wanting to earn extra money (38.3 percent). Among black multiple jobholders, nearly half reported that they held more than one job to earn extra money, with an additional one-third responding that they needed to meet expenses or pay off debt. Nearly 1 in 5 whites worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the second job, more than double the share of blacks, and 7 percentage points higher than that of Hispanics. Nonetheless, more than 1 in 4 whites moonlighted in order to meet expenses or pay off debt.

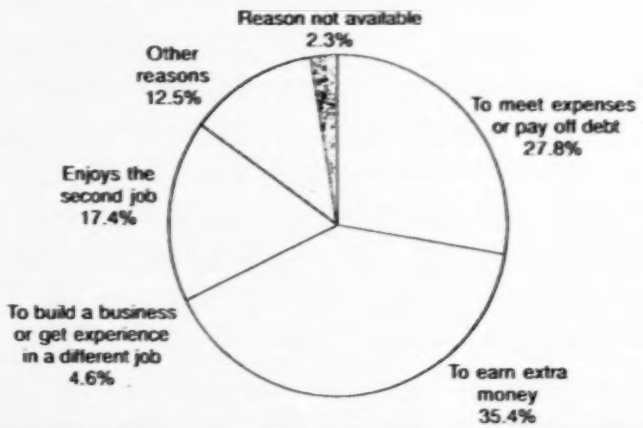
Meeting expenses or paying off debt was the primary reason why widowed, divorced, or separated persons held more than one job, with 39.9 percent citing these reasons, compared with 24.3 percent of married (spouse present) multiple jobholders. Conversely, a greater share of married persons (20.4 percent) than of widowed, divorced, or separated persons (13.7 percent) worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the work on the second job. Single (never married) persons were more likely to moonlight in order to earn extra money (43.0 percent) than were married multiple jobholders (32.4 percent).

Reasons for holding more than one job also varied among persons with different work schedules. For example, among those who worked two full-time jobs, 39.3 percent did so to meet expenses or pay off debt; this compares with 27.1 percent of persons with other schedules, such as those working full time on the primary job and part time on the secondary job. Among those who held two part-time jobs, 8.5 percent did so to build a business or get experience in a different job, more than double the share of moonlighters with other work schedules. Enjoyment of the second job was the reason given by 21.5 percent of persons for whom the hours varied on at least one job, about 5 percentage points higher than for workers with other schedules.

The overall number of multiple jobholders has declined since the last CPS study on main reason for multiple jobholding was conducted in May 1997. The percentage of workers reporting holding more than one job in order to meet expenses or pay off debt also declined; however, it is difficult to determine how much of this was due to changes made in the question design.[1]

For additional information on reasons for multiple jobholding, contact Jennifer L. Hallmartel, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statis-

Reasons for working more than one job, May 2001



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[1] In May 2001, the CPS question asked, "What is the MAIN reason you worked at more than one job?" The interviewer would then read the following list, from which the respondent could choose one: (1) meet expenses or pay off debt, (2) earn extra money, (3) build a business or get experience in a different job, (4) enjoy the second job, (5) some other reason. The same question was asked in May 1997, however, the interviewer would not read the response options. Instead, the interviewer would code responses into the most appropriate of the following categories: (1) to meet regular household expenses, (2) to pay off debts, (3) to save for the future, (4) to get experience in a different occupation or to build a business, (5) to help out a friend or relative, (6) to get extra money to buy something special, (7) enjoys the work on the second job, (8) changed jobs during the week, (9) other (specify).

Multiple jobholders by age, race, Hispanic origin, sex, marital status, work schedule, and reason for working more than one job, May 2001

Selected characteristics	Percent distribution by reason				
	To meet expenses or pay off debt	To earn extra money	To build a business or get experience in a different job	Enjoys the second job	Other reasons
Age and sex					
Total, 16 years and older	27.8	35.4	4.6	17.4	12.5
16 to 24 years	23.0	51.8	7.3	9.3	7.3
25 to 34 years	30.1	35.5	5.2	13.8	11.4
35 to 44 years	29.9	34.1	4.1	17.5	12.5
45 to 54 years	26.1	30.9	3.7	21.0	15.5
55 years and older	26.9	26.5	3.1	27.0	14.7
Men, 16 years and older	26.6	35.7	4.2	17.6	14.0
16 to 24 years	25.2	50.2	6.2	9.8	8.3
25 to 34 years	27.8	37.3	5.1	14.6	11.4
35 to 44 years	29.0	35.1	2.6	17.1	14.8
45 to 54 years	24.4	31.5	4.7	22.1	15.6
55 years and older	23.8	26.9	3.1	24.0	20.2
Women, 16 years and older	29.0	35.0	5.1	17.1	10.8
16 to 24 years	21.2	53.1	8.3	8.9	6.4
25 to 34 years	32.8	33.4	5.4	12.8	11.5
35 to 44 years	30.9	33.1	5.7	18.0	10.0
45 to 54 years	28.1	30.2	2.6	19.6	15.3
55 years and older	30.5	26.1	3.0	30.5	8.3

Selected characteristics	Percent distribution by reason				
	To meet expenses or pay off debt	To earn extra money	To build a business or get experience in a different job	Enjoys the second job	Other reasons
Race and Hispanic origin					
White	27.1	33.7	5.1	18.6	13.1
Black	32.8	47.4	2.2	8.2	7.3
Hispanic	40.9	38.3	3.4	11.3	5.4
Marital status					
Single	27.2	43.0	6.5	13.2	7.3
Married, spouse present	24.3	32.4	4.2	20.4	16.3
Other marital status[1]	39.9	33.5	3.2	13.7	7.6
Women who maintain families	47.7	30.7	4.8	9.5	5.4
Men who maintain families	40.7	33.9	4.7	13.3	4.2
Work schedules					
Primary job full time, secondary job part time	29.5	36.1	3.0	17.6	11.8
Primary job full time, secondary job full time	39.3	36.2	3.6	9.3	10.8
Primary job part time, secondary job part time	23.7	36.3	8.5	14.7	13.7
Hours vary on primary or secondary job	24.4	33.2	4.8	21.5	13.4

[1] Includes persons widowed, divorced, and separated.

NOTE: Data on the number of multiple jobholders differ from the regularly published monthly data because of differences in the estimation procedures used to produce the data. Detail will not sum to 100 percent because cases in which reasons for multiple jobholding were not available are not presented. Detail for race and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

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